

No. 2.

Mr. F. J. Moss to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

(No. 17/91.)

MY LORD,—

British Residency, Rarotonga, 31st August, 1891.

I have the honour to enclose, for your Excellency's information, the minutes of the Mangaia Council's first meeting on the 17th August (Enclosure No. 1). Also, the following copies of laws then passed (Enclosures Nos. 1-8):—No. 1, 1891, for the government of Mangaia; No. 2, 1891, for regulating the Au; No. 3, 1891, to punish bribery; No. 4, 1891, to punish rape; No. 5, 1891, to protect birds; No. 6, 1891, to prevent the introduction of disease; No. 7, 1891, to regulate the sale and use of dynamite. Also, copy of the old laws in force prior to the meeting of the Council, as compiled by the Committee appointed at a public meeting of the chiefs and people (Enclosure No. 9).

In Law No. 4 (rape) the age of consent is fixed at fifteen, the Council feeling very strongly that it should not be less.

The old laws are of the usual kind, and I doubt not that many of them will now speedily fall into desuetude. All liquor (intoxicating) is strictly prohibited by Nos. 5, 6, and 7 of these laws. The prohibition is easily and well maintained, as there are no harbours, and the landing on the reef is difficult. The open character of the country makes it also comparatively easy to prevent the manufacture of orange and other fermented liquors. In both these respects Mangaia differs essentially from Rarotonga.

The election of the Chairman of the Council was the occasion of a new and very violent outbreak of the old party feeling, threatening at one time to break up the Council altogether. I positively refused to continue in the chair, believing it would only patch the difference, and that it was necessary to have it fought out while myself in the island. A compromise was effected after a contest of two hours, during which a dozen were on their legs violently assailing each other at the same time. To have maintained the usual order was hopeless. Letting them exhaust themselves was the only possible course.

Of the laws passed, No. 1 (regulating the future government of Mangaia) is, I think, the only one calling for explanation.

The position of the *arikis*, or kings, before the passing of this law, was peculiar. It will be best made clear by reference to a portion of the early history of the tribes, given me by an old chief. The original migration was under an *Ariki* from Samoa, whose name was Ruanuku. Years afterwards there came from Tahiti another party under the chief Tanè. In the course of time Tanè's descendants conquered those of Ruanuku. The *Ariki* was made a prisoner, and employed to beat the conquering tribe's great drum, announcing peace and other great public events. The Tanès are now represented by Ngariu. A branch of them, the Manoni, is represented by Vaipo. Hence the prestige and power of these chiefs; while the *Ariki* continues poor in land and without followers, though still "the mouthpiece" (the drum-beater of old), as he is now called, of all the chiefs and people.

The island has from the first been divided into six poonas or "circles." At the head of each is the chief, who was called the *Paoa*, but has of late years been called Governor. Under them are the landowners, or *rangatiras*; and below them, again, is a landless class, the remnant of tribes conquered and largely eaten in the olden times. These remnants are known as the Amamas, and are almost entirely included now in Tamarua (Ngariu's district).

Under the new arrangement no change is made. The Government will consist of the six Governors and the two *Arikis*. The elder of these, King John, is now Chairman of the Government, and practically its chief, through whom all acts must be performed and all external communications be held. A very honourable and influential position is thus open to King John if he rises to it; and I have carefully impressed upon him that he will be held responsible for the proper administration of justice and the general good government of the island. He is a man of considerable ability and calm temperament, and will, I hope, have a long and useful career before him. So curious is the condition of things in Mangaia that the chief thing alleged against him is his father's marriage to a Rarotongan, and his consequent mixed descent. That, however, may now be expected to pass by.

There is no regard for personal liberty, nor any pretence to such a regard, in our sense of the term. At sunset a bell rings from the Mission House, and the streets of the two adjacent villages are at once paraded by policemen, each with a Native drum (*pate*), who warn the people to remain in their own premises, which they cannot then leave unless with a lighted torch in hand. After sunset the streets are thoroughly deserted, except by the police, who prowl about secretly, and enter any house, at any hour, without ceremony, to satisfy themselves that no improper proceedings are going on within. These police number 155—about one to every twelve of the whole population. Their qualification is church-membership, and this night duty is done by detachments selected weekly. They are under no control, and investigate charges upon which they practically decide, as the Judge generally accepts their statement without question. They are also the prosecutors, and, to crown the system, the police and the Judges alike depend for their pay upon the fines they levy, which are divided weekly among the detachment for that week.

No records are kept; and manifestly under such a system very great abuses become possible. Statements of the most shocking cruelty practised upon prisoners to make them criminate themselves, and of very immoral proceedings on the part of the police themselves, are to be heard from very credible people. But so great is the terror inspired by this formidable body that the natives who give the information always do so under pledges of secrecy which make the information worthless. Women are said to have been exposed in dark holes, and with little or no clothing, to the attacks of mosquitoes; men are said to have been hung up by the feet, and similar means taken to extort criminating confession and its attendant fine. The object is generally to discover how some girl or woman obtained a ring, a shawl, a coin, or something suspicious seen in her possession. If